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ABSTRACT

In order to identify the demands, the skills, and the various contexts that students can expect to face in their chosen professions, organizational communication researchers need to conduct studies that will lead educators to make intelligent decisions regarding what should and should not be taught in business and professional communication courses. As one step in this direction, a review was conducted of more than 40 recent studies that addressed communication needs in the organizational setting. The review revealed that communication is one of the most important aspects of organizational activity. In terms of the skills most required in businesses, the review revealed seven deemed critical: (1) listening, (2) writing, (3) oral communication, (4) persuasion and motivation, (5) group problem solving, (6) interviewing, and (7) interpersonal competency. The review also suggested that educators should move away from a "lecture/discussion/multiple choice test" mentality toward an approach that offers students a more accurate or realistic picture of organizational life. (FL)

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AN IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS, PROBLEMS AND ISSUES FOR THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION COURSE

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AN IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS, PROBLEMS AND ISSUES FOR THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION COURSE

During the 1980's, the academic community more than ever before must answer the challenges of course accountability and subject matter relevancy. In the past, education handled the accountability and relevancy issues by usually responding from a traditional pedagogical perspective. However, with the changing attitudes toward higher education, students' concern for employment, tighter budgets, and interest in career education, educators must now deal with the pragmatics of higher education more than they have in the past. The seventies have seen the introduction of nontraditional courses that attempt to bring practical skills and application to the theories and research covered in the classroom. There is also the realization that instruction cannot take place in a vacuum, but rather for courses to be effective and stimulating they must be essentially microcosms of the "real world" students will enter after graduation. However, before we start jumping on the career education bandwagon and begin teaching "real world 101", usually called Business and Professional Communication, educators must take the time to understand the real world our students will be entering after graduation. We need to identify the demands, the skills, the various contexts that our students will face once in their profession. To do this we need to conduct research that will enable educators to make intelligent decisions regarding what should and should not be taught in our Business and Professional Communication courses. Unless we have an understanding that accurately reflects the demands of the "real world" we will not be very successful in meeting the challenges of course accountability and subject matter relevancy.

During the past ten years or so there has been a tremendous amount of literature written on the issues of course accountability and subject matter relevancy. One area of literature that should be of great interest to communication educators has focused on identifying specific communication skills needed in a variety of real world situations. While the studies are diverse and represent different disciplines they all address the issue of communication and the practical application of skills to organizational settings. The purpose of this research report is to review over forty studies conducted during the seventies and early eighties and then to identify the critical communication skills needed to meet our students' real world demands. Hopefully, this report will serve as a first step in helping concerned business and professional communication educators identify the communication skills necessary to move the real world into their classrooms. Once we have an understanding of what has been done, we can begin the process of cataloguing important communication skills and then devising teaching strategies for training our students in those communication skills.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND PROBLEM RESEARCH

Zollitsch and Krusing[1] researched what top executives expect from business administration graduates by surveying 300 presidents of small and large firms. Eighty-seven presidents expected graduates to have knowledge in the following areas in descending order of frequency: accounting; finance; economics; statistics and quantitative methods; basic skills of management (planning, organizing, motivating, etc.); computer capabilities; human relations; and marketing. However, the top four skills which executives expected graduates to have (again in descending order of importance) were: communicate; analyze data, propose solutions and make decisions; work with and use the skills of other people, motivate; and plan, develop, organize

and coordinate. The skill of "communicate" was defined in terms of both oral and writing skills. Tactfulness and skills in human relations together represented the second most important attribute or trait desirable in graduates. The researchers describe the ability to communicate effectively as the "chief skill" needed by business graduates. Drawing upon a survey question regarding the perceived percentage of business graduates having this skill, the authors conclude that "it seems safe to say that close to fifty percent of Business Administration Colleges are graduating students who do not possess the minimal qualifications expected by top executives."[2]

Bennett[3] investigated the communication needs of business executives by successfully surveying 35 of 58 top executives (in most cases, vice presidents) of large corporations in California. Every respondent felt that effective business communication skills played a role in advancing to top executive positions. The executives indicated that oral communication skills were slightly more important than written communication skills. Ninety-four percent of the executives reported using oral communication skills extensively in their present positions. Eighty-three percent reported the same for written communication skills. These results suggest that oral communication courses need to be included for business administration students. Every executive reported using the medium of oral presentation. The author concluded that "the ability to communicate effectively is extremely important to businessmen and this ability plays a significant part in moving to top management positions."[4]

Following up on the Zollitsch and Krusing survey, Edge and Greenwood[5] successfully surveyed 132 of 200 personnel managers in Hawaii and New York. The managers were asked to determine the order of importance of different areas of knowledge, skills and attributes possessed by business administration

graduates. A knowledge of human relations was second only to basic knowledge in management within the knowledge domain. Communication and the ability to work with and use skills of other people (motivating) were, respectively, the top two skills. Tactfulness was the top attribute/traite listed. The authors write that "the personnel managers . . . showed a strong and consistent preference toward people-oriented knowledge, skills and attributes." These people-oriented skills were seen as more important than business- or quantitative-oriented skills. Finally, "the study indicates that a relatively low percentage of college graduates are meeting the expectations of personnel managers."[6]

Erickson[7] focused exclusively on trying to determine the communication needs of the technical graduate through questionnaires sent to industries in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota. A summary of the 133 responses in terms of on-the-job language communication skills reported that technicians spent six percent of their time on business letters, eleven percent of their time on writing technical reports, ten percent of their time reading technical articles, and thirty percent of their time in oral communication. In addition, the study found that a total of 49.9 percent of research work is spent in reporting. This is further broken down into written reporting, 24.5 percent and oral reporting, 25.4 percent.

Zaugg[8] directed a study in which 34 personnel officers in the Toledo area were interviewed to determine the communication skills needed in business management. The following oral communication skills (in descending order of importance) were identified: perform well in conferences with people outside the company; and speak before outside groups. The following written communication skills (in descending order of importance) were identified: write letters with informal reports; write formal reports; write procedures; write policy statements; write notices to go to people within the company.

A report by Huegli and Tschirgli[9] investigated entry-level communication skills of 101 graduates in accounting, finance, marketing, management, production, and engineering. The 13 most frequently mentioned communication skills employed by entry-level employees in descending order of frequency were:

1. conferences with boss about work
2. conferences with others at the same level
3. listen to boss' ideas and suggestions
4. sell my ideas to others face to face
5. conferences with subordinates about their work
6. written reports to boss about my work
7. written proposals for new action for my organization
8. sell my ideas in written reports
9. written requests for information to others in the organization
10. write technical reports
11. conferences with customers about selling/servicing
12. conferences with suppliers
13. make public appearances and give speeches.

The authors conclude:

> in most cases entry level employees are more active in implementing oral communication skills than written skills. This finding appears to be in line with past research relative to the communication activities of top managers, middle managers, and foremen, which has demonstrated a reliance on oral communication skills in horizontal and vertical directions . . . .[10]

Lohr[11] studied how recent graduates from Iowa State University perceived fourteen communication activities. One hundred and thirty-six respondents

suggested the following ranking of communication activities in terms of importance: giving information to one person; making decisions with one person; giving information to a group; persuading one person; listening to one person's requests or difficulties; making decisions with a group; and persuading a group. For our concern, the following communication activities (of the fourteen) were ranked as being most difficult to accomplish and are listed in descending order of difficulty: persuading a group; making decisions with a group; persuading a person; listening to a group's requests or difficulties; giving information to a group; making decisions with one person; listening to one person's requests or difficulties; listening to someone speak to a group; and giving information to one person.

South[12] investigated the early career performance of nonsupervisory engineers who had been on the job not more than five years. A factor analysis extracted six basic components (the factor analysis was on 297 daily activities as rated by 124 supervisors) of job performance. The following two components of greatest importance to communication educators:

1. Communication has to do with preparation and transmission of information either written and/or oral concerning the work activities. Selecting points to cover, timing the communication, restating information and maintaining work records are characteristic. Communication may be in the form of written reports and orally communicating with others . . . . Specific communication behaviors are: (1) writes so can understand it; (2) reports seldom require extensive revision and/or rewriting; (3) relays important information to others in writing; (4) reports show careful thinking; (5) records of work are adequate and accurate; (6) summarizes and reports important points--

not specific details; (7) can communicate with outsiders or people not working on the problem; (8) can discuss the results of work concisely, clearly, and thoroughly; (9) can easily explain technical problems to others; and (10) can restate a question to get new information.

2. Relating to others has to do with getting along with people. It is concerned with good personal adjustment and harmonious work relations with co-workers; accepting rules, regulations, and supervisor's directions; being friendly, cooperative, and fostering good group feeling . . . . Specific relating to others behaviors are: (1) does not offend other co-workers; (2) does not create resentment among others by comments, arguing, etc.; (3) does not alienate others by personal strivings for recognition; (4) is readily accepted by co-workers; (5) is patient with others who do not know as much; (6) works well with other (all types) of people; (7) respects other people's abilities or judgments; (8) is tolerant of others' ideas; (9) can take advice; and (10) appreciates the other person's point of view.[13]

Calhoon and Jerdee[14] studied first level supervisory training needs in various occupational groups (skilled, human service and medical care, clarical, administrative, technical, unskilled and semiskilled, firemen, and policemen) found in city government. Asking first and second level supervisors to respond, 1521 supervisors indicated the following areas that need training: decision making and problem solving; methods improvement, keeping abreast of new developments; setting goals for subordinates; motivating subordinates; training and developing of subordinates; and planning, organizing, and scheduling the unit's work. Second level supervisors indicated

that first level supervisors needed training in the following areas: setting goals for subordinates; motivating subordinates; checking on performance of subordinates; encouraging ideas from subordinates; giving orders to subordinates; giving information to subordinates; taking prompt action on decisions from above and carrying out instructions. First level supervisors indicated that they needed help in making oral presentations.

Feild and Holley[15] investigated public personnel with regard to performance appraisal ratings. Two thousand one hundred managers, representing 17 state agencies, who supervised a variety of nonsupervisory personnel (workers in technical, clerical, and maintenance positions) were sent questionnaires. Based on 1117 (53 percent) responses they found that communication oriented skills receiving the following ratings from among 21 traits were: third, cooperation; fourth, communication ability; seventh, relationship with the public; and eighth, relationship with others.

Goldhaber et al.[16] conducted a Manpower Resources study in the Buffalo, New York, area and identified communication skills and abilities used by people in industry, business, health and education type organizations. Respondents through questionnaires or telephone interviews were asked to identify the communication abilities utilized in their organization. Report writing and oral reporting were ranked either one or two by all four organization types. Other communication abilities ranked consistently high were: speech writing, analysis and training; development and analysis of surveys; media impact analysis; film evaluation; public opinion assessment; and organizational development and training. The researchers also asked what communication skills were being utilized and found that only listening and performance appraisal were consistently ranked high. Other skills mentioned were public relations, persuasion, counseling, and interviewing.

Lockwood and Boatman[17] generated a list of career-oriented skills for entry-level positions from the "Proceedings of the 1972 Speech Communication Association Summer Conference in Career Communication Education." The skills most frequently mentioned by participants were: small group facilitation; interviewing; problem solving/decision making; public relations; listening; persuasion, motivation; conflict resolution; speaking competence; relationship building; and questioning techniques.

In a study conducted by Spicer,[18] 41 business and organizational communication experts were asked to identify the communication skills which students entering the business field in 1980 should possess. The skill areas identified were: human relations; information interviewing; listening and feedback; message meanings; organizational functions; personnel relationships; power and conflict; small groups; and communication theory. The author suggested that "the findings indicate that a variety of skills geared toward enhancing the individual's ability to communicate within organizational settings will be required by those entering the business arena in the near future."[19]

Weinrauch and Swanda examined and analyzed the status of listening activities in comparison to other forms of business communication by surveying 46 practioners in business and industry in the South Bend, Indiana area. Respondents, primarily managers, reported spending 10.9 hours each day in communication activities. Seventy-nine percent of this time was spent listening and speaking. Practioners spend from one-fourth to one-third of their work time listening. They spend from one-fifth to one-fourth of their time speaking. The remainder of time spent in communication involves writing and reading. The authors conclude that "increased emphasis in the training and development of listening skills among business students stands to foster a sizable impact on the business community."

Di Salvo, Larsen, and Seiler[21] in a study attempting to isolate communication skills used by graduates of a College of Business Administration who were on the job five years or less found that the communication skills ranked as being most important to the respondent's job success by the 197 respondents were: listening; persuading; advising; instructing; and small group problem solving. In response to an open-ended question asking these graduates to describe those communication skills they wish had been obtained while in school were: writing; listening; small group leadership and problem solving communication; human relations; persuasion and attitude theory; and presentation of technical information.

Murray[22] studying governmental management public administrators at the local and state level sent 100 surveys to public administrators in the United States. Based upon 70 (70 percent) responses he found that from a list of eight skills managers need in order to perform effectively in public service, communication (oral or written) was rated number one. The following skills were also listed under the "other skills" option: interpersonal skills; group leadership abilities; ability to persuade; and small group dynamics. In addition, he found that the skills young professionals are most deficient in are ability to write clearly and oral communication skills. Finally, "Even though most of the findings were not startling or surprising, schools of public administration should be encouraged to give greater attention to deficiencies in two areas--oral and written communications."[23]

Novick[24] in a content analysis of a conference on Civil Engineering Education reported that civil engineers needed a number of communication competencies for success in the engineering field. In capsulizing the content of the conferences plenary sessions, and panel discussions, he concluded that the civil engineer's success depended on the mastery of audience analysis and adaptation, public speaking, small group communication, listening and empathy.

Penrose[25] looked at the attitudes of business leaders toward the importance of communication in business. Selecting every tenth business firm in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory, 314 questionnaires were mailed. One hundred fifty-seven (50 percent) replies from banking and finance, construction, insurance, manufacturing, and retailing, among others, rated twelve abilities according to how valuable they were to their business. The following abilities were ranked above average in value (they appear in descending order of value): public relations; marketing; accounting; finance; business speaking; business writing; mathematics; and office administration.

Baran and Shoemaker[26] report a study undertaken by the Department of Speech Communication at Cleveland State University in the greater metropolitan Cleveland area. Four hundred two employers were contacted through telephone interviews. Among the questions asked, one is especially relevant to our concerns in this paper. Respondents were asked to name communication-related areas in their organizations which were not functioning as effectively and efficiently as they might wish. The following were most frequently identified as problem areas: conflicts between employees and managers or executives; design of internal media; conflicts between managers and executives; communication problems relating to specific external publics; and conflicts between employees.

Persing et al.[27] successfully surveyed 36 of 49 graduate business respondents from 23 states. Respondents were asked to evaluate business communication courses along several dimensions. For our purposes, the most significant findings were as follows. The respondents reported spending 30.6 percent of their time talking to others on the phone or in person and 26 percent of their time listening. In terms of course content, respondents indicated that letter writing and long reports should receive less emphasis.

More emphasis should be placed on interoffice memos, platform speaking, interpersonal and small group communication, interviewing, listening, nonverbal communication, barriers to communication and psychology of communication. As for teaching methods, respondents expressed a preference for much less lecturing and much more small group discussion and student presentations. Eighty-one percent of the graduates reported a strong need for strengthening communication skills in the following areas (in descending order of proportion): interpersonal communication; psychology of communication; letters; oral reports; written reports; telephone; interviewing; semantics; meetings; memos; nonverbal communication; dictating and "other".

Baird, Bradely, and Nightingale,[28] investigating managerial communication style, collected 99 questionnaires from subordinates in a large Midwestern hospital (subjects were randomly selected from eleven randomly selected units within the hospital). The following subordinate preferences for managerial communication style were identified: listening carefully; friendliness; comfortable with almost everyone; attentive to others when they are talking; is concerned about others; and physically and vocally active when communicating. The following were identified as preferences that subordinates did not like in their superiors: quick to challenge others when they disagree; communicates dramatically; tends to "come on strong;" very open communicator, willing to reveal personal matters. The authors place a qualifier on their findings as they note, "to generalize these preferences to all settings is, at this point, clearly unwarranted."[29]

They conclude that students should be acquainted with the elements of communicator style, shown the importance of employee preferences for managerial communication styles, and provided some sort of value system to guide their selection of appropriate communication styles as future managers.

Finally, teachers must present to their students not only content-related strategies, but strategies considering communication styles.

In a study by Eman et al.,[30] four Sunday editions were randomly selected from high circulation newspapers in four geographical areas of the country. Each region was represented by ten newspapers, hence 160 papers were analyzed. Nearly 6300 classified advertisements were found which called for communication skill(s). These advertisements were then content analyzed. The two most frequently mentioned communication skills in the advertisements were verbal communication and selling followed by written communication, counseling, recruiting, interviewing, and supervisory skills. Another group of skills identified but not mentioned as often as the previous group were: promotional; negotiation and bargaining; coordination; leadership; motivational; training and orientation; and group dynamics. The authors conclude that they were impressed with the "mix of interpersonal and public communication skills called for in the advertisements--skills that stress both the relational and instrumental aspects of communicating. Based upon the results of this survey, the conclusion could be made that those departments which provide a balance between these two aspects of communication are the most effective in preparing students for careers in business and industry."[31]

Hanna[32] collected 55 responses from Chief Executive Officers in businesses ranging in size from eight employees to 7000. The author suggested that if we want to identify communication skills to teach career-oriented students, one way to identify these skills would be to isolate the communication problems people currently encounter in organizations. The following is a weighted listing of the most troublesome communication situations for organizational members as ranked by 55 executives. The four most frequently ranked communication situations were: motivating people and listening, followed by giving directions; delegating authority; group problem solving; and handling grievances.

The author concludes:

> if teachers wish to teach courses which are oriented toward career training in the business community, then the communication skills involved in motivating people, delegating authority; listening, direction giving; and group problem solving should be stressed. Less emphasis should be placed on formal presentation and more on conference leadership and participation. Included in instruction should be a focus on the potential problems involved in the use of a telephone. Finally, close attention must be given to the skills involved in both giving and getting feedback for correction and control of messages, especially where the feedback flows between levels in an organizational hierarchy.[33]

Hill,[34] concerned with the need for communication research, education, and consultation to improve communication among health care professionals, conducted a survey of approximately 70 hospitals in northeastern Ohio. Collecting information from nursing, nursing support, technical/professional, supervisory and administrative personnel found the following skills to be "most important" for their job effectiveness: interdepartmental communication; listening skills; getting feedback; and interpersonal communication. She goes on to say, "The importance of this survey and the numerous articles in health related journals calling for 'communication help' demonstrates that the climate is ready for input from the discipline of communication into the health care system."[35]

Meister and Reinsch[36] conducted an investigation involving the Directors of Training of 261 manufacturing firms located in Illinois. While the questionnaire dealt with a broad range of issues related to communication training, one question in particular is relevant to our interests. This question asked

the Directors to identify perceived communication deficiencies of new trainees. Eighty-eight responded, saying they had a formal training program and identified the following communication skill deficiencies (listed in descending order of frequency): listening; writing; management/employee relations; problem solving; leadership; and decision making. In addition the authors noted, "for many managers, college undergraduate training may be the only training they will receive in communication."[37]

In a study to determine the activities essential to an administrative management position, Smith[38] sent out a questionnaire to members of the Academy of Certified Administrative Managers. He found that skills related to communicating and working with people tend to be considered more important by the Certified Administrative Managers than technical abilities. In addition, the following specific skills were identified as being extremely critical: listen actively; give clear, effective instructions; accept your share of responsibility for problems; and identify the real problem. The following were identified as highly critical: manage time; give recognition for excellent performance; communicate decisions to employees; communicate effectively (orally); shift priorities if necessary; obtain and provide feedback in two-way communication sessions; and explain work.

Spicer[39] asked people who were employed as communication specialists what they thought were the important communication skills, academic and pragmatic, for college graduates wishing to enter the field they currently are in. The 79 respondents were grouped into journalists and trainers. The journalists listed writing as an essential skill followed by photography, oral presentation techniques involving audio-visual formats, and typing. The trainers identified the ability to write clearly and concisely as essential followed by skills related to audio-visual presentations, consulting (especially workshop design), conducting research, and computer data processing.

Andrews and Koester[40] investigated the accounting profession's expectations of the newly hired accountants' communication skills. Based upon 332 (29 percent) responses from accountants in business (questionnaires were also sent to 288 accounting educators), they found approximately 50 percent saying that written communication skills were ineffective or highly ineffective. They also found that nonnumerical report writing presented the greatest problem for the young accountant with message organization being the major area of concern. In addition, they found the need for more formal training in oral communication. They state that, "The challenge for the educator is to devise mechanisms that require more articulation of conceptual ideas, instead of numerical manipulation, while dealing with increasing numbers of students."[41]

Even[42] investigated the nature of counseling expertise in adult education practice. Twenty-eight practioners/graduate students in the Adult and Continuing Education Department of the University of Nebraska kept extensive logs of their interpersonal activities. Five consultants in adult education counseling then analyzed these logs. Next, these consultants led seminars with the practioners to delineate the variety of knowledge, attitudinal and skill areas mentioned in the logs. Through the information generated in the logs and through the seminars, a list of 63 subcategories of "interpersonal expertise" was developed. While it is not possible to provide the entire list here, a sampling of the subcategories will be useful: active listening; interviewing, giving and receiving feedback, empathetic understanding, group process techniques and group functions, group dynamics, role differentiation, problem solving and conflict resolution, social systems and information processing, decision making processes and techniques, and change agent.

Even writes: "The study has demonstrated a desire for depth, breadth, and a higher level of interpersonal expertise among adult educators . . . graduate programs should be reassessed to determine whether they are meting these needs."

Marlier and Phillips-Madson[43] surveyed 120 chairpeople from academic programs outside the field of speech communication. The communication skills identified by these respondents as being in most need of development and application were the abilities to critically evaluate messages, to identify messages as being informative or persuasive, and to relate and support one's own viewpoint. Skills that were identified for their importance to academic and career success included organizing messages, effective responses to questions, clear and concise direction giving, message summarizing, and representing another's viewpoint.

Stine and Skarzenski,[44] seeking answers to the question "What should we teach our students in business communication courses?" surveyed 120 businesses with offices in Iowa representing manufacturing, insurance, construction, finance, retail, food processing, utilities, education research and service type organizations. Eighty-two (69 percent) responded that the most common type of written communication was memos and letters. They were also asked to rank 20 communication oriented items in terms of what should be taught in school. The top ten in descending order were: clarity; conciseness; organization; letters; grammar; memos; oral presentations; spelling; word choice; and reports. They conclude, "Business executives seemed to agree on two important points: clarity, conciseness, organization, grammar and spelling are the most important basic skills; letters, memos and reports are the most important business forms."[45]

Woodcock[46] studied characteristic oral and written business communication problems found in managerial trainees. Selecting 57 managerial trainees (they were obtained by contacting 96 of the largest corporations in the Memphis-Shelby County, Tennessee area) and using a Q-sort technique (in each case, the managerial trainee, the secretary and the immediate supervisor completed the Q-sort) covering the following areas: writing principles, organizational communications, and oral presentations. He found that the biggest problem areas were letters and memorandums followed by oral communication. He goes on to say, ". . . it is obvious by the ranking of immediate supervisors that they are extremely concerned in the 'oral communications.' While it may be true that supervisors are not aware of the writing strengths and weaknesses of the managerial trainee to the extent that the trainee's secretary is, it could still be concluded that the supervisor is more concerned about the trainee's inability to speak than the trainee's inability to write."[47]

A survey[48] of forty-two Speech Communication Association members in non-academic positions required respondents to provide job titles and descriptions, to identify their jobs as entry or non-entry level, and to rank seven skills they felt to be important to their jobs and entry-level positions similar in nature to their own jobs. The most commonly cited communication skill was writing. In order of ranking other skills that were mentioned were speaking, small group or interpersonal skills, research skills, ability to organize, listening and analysis.

A survey by Brownlee and Brownlee[49] of 150 law schools aimed at discerning what type of communication competencies were required in the law profession. Eighty-one schools responded with usable data, and the results

confirmed the utility of communication training for attorneys. Five communication skills were considered most important. These were basic argumentation, interviewing, organizing messages, and public speaking. The authors conclude that these skills, while included in courses for pre-law students, are rarely applied to the legal setting, and perhaps not as valuable to the student as they could be.

Fitch,[50] interested in determining the oral communication skills needed by young scientists surveyed scientists from petroleum, chemical, biological research institutes, and contract research groups. Based upon 79 (59 percent) responses to the questionnaire, the following eight communication skills were ranked in descending order of value:

1. routine information exchange
2. formal paper presentations with the use of visual aids
3. small group techniques: participating in small groups or conferences
4. discussion leadership: charing small, informal problem-solving meetings
5. instructing/teaching techniques
6. public speaking before a large group
7. formal paper presentations without the use of visual aids
8. parliamentary leadership: chairing large, formal group meetings.

Responses to an open-ended question, "What communication skills do you wish you had been taught or had been taught better at your university?" were: public speaking; discussion leadership; formal paper presentation, with the use of visual aids; organization of ideas; visual aids; and small group techniques. She concludes, "It appears that university programs are not meeting the need of preparing scientists to present their ideas to the colleagues or the general public."[51]

In an attempt to follow up on the 1976 Di Salvo et al. study, Di Salvo and Steere[52] using a stratified random sample sent out questionnaires to recent graduates from professional and pre-professional colleges and departments. Based on 192 responses the most important communication activities for job success were: relationship building; listening; advising; persuading; routine information exchange; instructing; and motivating. Finally, the following communication problems were identified: fail to receive needed information; fail to receive information on time; difficult to get answers from supervisors; serious misunderstandings between people; and giving clear, effective instructions.

Rader and Wunsch[53] set out to determine how much time is spent on different communication activities in differnt jobs. After successfully sampling 93 of 437 recent College of Business Administration graduates of Arizona State University, the researchers found that 90 percent indicated that the ability to communicate orally was very important to their jobs. Sixty-two percent indicated that the ability to communicate in writing was very important to their jobs. Oral communication skills were rated as very important by 100 percent of the respondents in these job categories: clerical/secretarial; marketing; personnel; production/plant management; public relations and teaching. Respondents reported spending 37 percent of their work time speaking and 19 percent of their work time listening. Persons in office/general management, marketing and personnel positions respectively spent 50, 43 and 43 percent of their time speaking. The authors conclude that "a course in oral communication should be required of business majors."

Swenson[54] investigated the relative importance of business communication skills needed by college graduates by successfully surveying 45 of 100 executives of large industrial corporations. Face-to-face communication emerged

as the most important of all business communication skills (oral and writing). Small group oral communication skill was the second most important communication skill. Communicating with individuals and groups outside the firm and dictating messages were the third and fourth most important oral communication skills. Large group oral communication within the firm surfaced as the fifth most important oral skill. Formal speaking outside the firm was the least important oral communication skill. The most important writing skills related to writing formal memos, reports, business letters and short reports.

Di Salvo and Backus[55] investigated the importance of communication skills in a variety of health care organizations. Based on 143 responses the following skills were rated most important to their job success: listening; motivating; instructing; relationship building; advising; and giving feedback. While the following skills gave them the most problems: motivating; conflict resolution; soliciting feedback; giving orders; and persuading. Finally, the most serious problems mentioned were: fail to receive needed information; motivating; not enough face-to-face communication; serious misunderstandings between people; and fail to receive information on time.

Young,[56] in a comparative survey of home economics professionals and teacher educators, sought to identify communication skills required in these respective fields. The respondents were given a list of 13 communication competencies. Home economics professionals ranked highest the skills of conversing in professional situations, public speaking, and oral processes such as argumentation, persuation, and questioning. Teacher educators ranked most highly listening skills, evaluation skills, public speaking, conversation and oral processes similar to those mentioned above.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the studies reviewed above several observations can be made regarding communication in organizations that are relevant to the Business and Professional Communication course. It is quite clear that communication is one of, if not the most important, aspects of one's organizational activity. Proficiency in various communication skills is essential, required and expected, is often valued above technical expertise or skills, and is likely to play an important role in promotions. Formal training in communication will usually not be provided within the organization but must come from the college level. If communication educators are looking for someone to say that communication is crucial to organizational life or for testimonials on the importance of communication in organizations, the forty-five studies reported above offer just that.

Second, the review of the 45 studies offers evidence for business and professional communication educators regarding which communication skills need to be concentrated on in the classroom. Based on which skills were mentioned most frequently and considered most important and/or problematic, seven critical communication skills were identified. The seven critical skills are: listening actively and responding to superiors, subordinates, and co-workers; written communication (emphasis on business letters, memos requesting information and coordinating work activities, and reports and proposals); oral communication (the need for developing a speaking competency for giving oral reports, clear instructions/directions, and routine information exchange); persuasion/motivation (skills useful for motivating subordinates to do their job and selling one's ideas to others within the organization); group problem solving (emphasis on understanding the dynamics of groups, techniques for leading and facilitating group discussion, and

problem solving techniques); interviewing skills (focus on questioning techniques to aid in collecting information from others within the organization); and interpersonal competency (skills necessary for developing and maintaining relationships in the organization, sensitive to people, able to give and solicit feedback, able to handle conflict positively, and being accepted by co-workers). Of these seven critical communication skills, the evidence indicates that listening, written and oral communication and interpersonal competency should be viewed as the super critical communication skills that students need for their careers.

A third observation from the studies called for communication educators to move away from a "lecture-discuss my lecture-multiple choice test" mentality toward an approach that offers students a more accurate or realistic picture of organizational life. Students should be placed in situations that offer them the opportunities to develop problem solving skills in terms of what to look for in a situation and decide how best to solve it. Today's student needs to understand that in day-to-day organizational activities there are seldom "the correct answer" situations. The best anyone can hope to do is to make decisions as well informed as possible and then be ready to make adjustments to that decision. Students need to be placed in more "who, what, where, when, why" problem solving/critical thinking situations while in college.

Based on these observations a number of recommendations can be made regarding communication and education. Students entering organizations, regardless of organization type or career choice must have a course or courses in communication. It is apparent, after reviewing 45 studies, that written and oral communication skills are a must. Both areas were labeled super critical skills. If only one course is available, the course must emphasize both oral and written communication skills. A more realistic

approach would be to have two courses, one emphasizing written communication competencies and the other oral communication skills. The ideal and strongest recommendation would be to have four courses, two dealing with the various aspects of written communication; one course on oral communication; and one focusing on interpersonal communication, small group problem solving, and motivation/persuasion (motivation/persuasion can also be handled in written communication). The area of listening would be covered in all courses.

If, as educators, we are to meet the challenge of the 1980's and successfully deal with accountability and relevancy, we must continue the process of determining which communication skills are being used and are important for various careers. We also need to develop teaching strategies for bringing these skills into the classroom; that is, creating ways to teach the communications skills and situations that the seventies have suggested are important. Research during the seventies and eighties suggests that the following skills are important and necessary for students to have in entering the world of work: listening, written communication, oral communication, persuasion/motivation, interviewing, small group problem solving, and interpersonal competency. It is now our responsibility as educators to make those intelligent decisions about what should and should not be taught and to convert the observations and recommendations in this report into something that can be taught in the classroom. If this can be done, then, maybe it is time to begin teaching "real world communication," in our Business and Professional Communication courses.

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